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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2007

In Today's Papers

Barzani on the PKK, Kirkuk
All papers report Massoud Barzani, president of the regional Kurdish administration, told Turkey's NTV that it would be out of the question for his administration to fight against the PKK in northern Iraq. Barzani welcomed Ankara's initiative to establish dialogue with the Iraqi Kurdish leaders. He rejected the allegations that the regional administration supports the PKK: "Rest assured that the PKK presence in the Kandil region is not dependent on our approval. It is not easy to control this remote region. General Buyukanit knows the difficulties and the conditions in the region better than many people. He should not expect us to confront the PKK militarily." Barzani reiterated his thesis that Kirkuk is a Kurdish city, the people of Kirkuk have waited patiently, and the referendum to determine the status of Kirkuk will not be put off. He maintained that external intervention in Kirkuk will worsen the situation. Independence is the Kurds' natural right, Barzani said, stressing that the Turks, Iranians, and the Arabs should "get used to" that idea.

Turkey Wants to Host Iraq's Neighbors Meeting
Sabah, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet and others report Turkey wants to host the 12th meeting of Iraq's neighbors, in which representatives of the US, EU and UN will also participate. Cumhuriyet says Ankara wants to revive Iraq's neighbors' meetings mechanism, with the next gathering to be held at the "technical level" in Iraq in the second half of March, to be followed by a high-level meeting in Istanbul. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Erdogan denied yesterday press reports that he was planning an official visit to Iraq in March.

Court Sentenced DTP Leaders
All papers report that Ankara 9th Heavy Penal Court sentenced DTP leader Ahmet Turk and his deputy Aysel Tugluk to 18 months in prison on charges of distributing party materials in the Kurdish language and praising jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. Turk and Tugluk may not be able to run in the general elections since article 76 of the constitution and article 11 of the Election Law stipulate that those who are sentenced to imprisonment for a term of more than one year shall not be elected to Parliament.

Meanwhile Yeni Safak reports that former DEP deputies Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle, Selim Sadak and Orhan Dogan who stayed in prison for 10 years on charges of belonging to a terrorist organization will join the DTP at an extraordinary party convention tomorrow in Ankara. The four Kurdish activists will be working on the party administrative board.

Editorial Commentary on Anti-PKK Operations in Europe

Kubilay Celik writes in the nationalist Tercuman: "The operations on February 8 against PKK networks in European countries were met with joy in the Turkish media. However, there are now enough indications to prove that this was only a cosmetic and false action. France, for instance, arrested 14 PKK members, and 8 of them are now free. Among those released are the Europe chieftain of the PKK and the accountant. Just watch -- you will see other releases in other countries as well. Consider the crimes they were arrested for: financing terror, organized crimes, money laundering and drug trafficking. Anyone who commits these kinds of crimes goes to jail for years. But it was not the case this time! The only thing that remains is for us to continue to listen to the lies from the US -- that they are pressuring Europe to cut off the PKK's financial resources and getting results."

Turkish Hizbullah Members Sentenced to Life

All papers report 20 members of Turkish Hizbullah have been given life sentences for killing 38 people in southeast Turkey in the late 1980s and early 1990s, targeting mostly Kurds during fighting between Turkish security forces and the PKK. Another two defendants

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were sentenced to 16 years due to their young age when the murders were committed. The case lasted 13 years.

Sarafyan Proposal for a Joint Research on the Armenian Issue

Commentator Ismet Berkan, writing in Radikal expressed hope that contacts between Gomidas Institute's Ara Sarafyan and Turkish History Institution's Yusuf Halacoglu might constitute a first step for establishing a historians committee between the two countries. Berkan referred to a letter from Sarafyan who proposed the following steps for the joint research: 1. The Gomidas Institute would present to Halacoglu documents showing that what had happened in Harput in 1915 and that this was not a simple exodus but harassment, massacre and genocide; 2. Halacoglu would present them documents on how the exodus in and around Harput was implemented and how each family was moved from one place and settled in another; 3. Sides would study whether the exchanged documents were credible. They would see what the similar points or differences were. Later all these documents would be available for whoever wanted to study them.

Berkan stressed that the important point was that historians from both sides would begin to study documents. He also predicted that this process would allow Turkey to take a deep breath in the international arena.

Srebrenica Massacre was Genocide

All papers report the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has ruled that the death of 8,000 Bosnians in Srebrenica was "genocide" but that the Serbians were "not directly responsible." Turkish papers react to the decision, with Cumhuriyet quoting Srebrenica Victims Association in Turkey as saying, "Once again, Europe has shown that it's against Muslims." A headline in the conservative/intellectual Zaman reads, "The Justice of The Hague: 'Genocide' Committed in Bosnia, but Serbia is Not Responsible." The Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak says, "Genocide Committed in Srebrenica, with No One Responsible." The liberal/intellectual Radikal says in a headline, "The Hague Blatantly Clears Belgrade of Genocide." Mainstream Sabah reports thousands of Bosnians react to the decision blocking their way to file lawsuits for compensation.

Erdal Safak comments in the mass appeal Sabah: "The events of 1995 were an ethnic cleansing which the ICJ also defined as genocide. This is compatible with the decision of the International Penal Court earlier, whdovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, the commander of the militia. All of this clearly is enough for more than 3,500 people to turn their graves. This is the justice coming from big powers, if you can call it justice."

TV Highlights
NTV, 6.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands will visit Turkey from February 27-March 2 to meet with President Sezer and Prime Minister Erdogan as well as address the AKP MPs in the Parliament.
- Two suspects detained in connection with the murder of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink have been released.
- The Turkish High Election Board again plans to ink voters' thumbs in the general elections to ensure they do not cast multiple ballots.

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- Tehran has warned Ankara not to re-export Iranian natural gas to third countries.
- Turkey's Finansbank said it will go by the official title Credit Europe Bank as of March 1, 2007.

International News

- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said in Kabul Turkey will increase its troops to 1,000 from 825 with the NATO-led force ISAF in Afghanistan in April.
- Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev joined a ceremony to mark the 15th anniversary of the Khojaly genocide. Armenians have killed more than 600 civilians in the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly in February 26, 1992.
- Iraq's Shia vice president Adel Abdul-Mahdi has escaped an assassination attempt with bruises.
- The London-based Minority Rights Group International said minority groups in Iraq are facing desperate conditions, a barrage of attacks, and the threat of being forced out of their homeland.
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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